

Public Notice of ESSA Waiver for Eighth Grade Science Flexibility

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) is seeking comments on the following waiver request for the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), as amended by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), which will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. A survey with an opportunity for comments is provided at this [link](#) until 11:59 p.m. **August 16**. Questions should be submitted to Allison Timberlake, Deputy Superintendent for Assessment and Accountability, at atimberlake@doe.k12.ga.us.

In an effort to limit the burden of over-testing, states are provided the option under the Every Student Succeeds Act of exempting eighth-grade students from their end-of-grade mathematics assessment provided a) those students have completed a high school mathematics course and are administered the end-of-course assessment associated with that course, b) their performance on the assessment is used in the year the student takes the assessment to measure academic achievement, and c) in high school the student takes a more advanced high school mathematics assessment. Although Georgia no longer qualifies for the existing exception in eighth-grade math, the State is submitting a waiver request to the U.S. Department of Education for four years (2022-2025 school years), asking that this exception be extended to all eighth-grade students completing the high school physical science course.

In order to support accelerated models of learning, eliminate extra testing, and ensure testing closely aligns with instruction, Georgia is seeking to expand ESSA's eighth grade mathematics assessment exception to eighth grade students in high school physical science. The State was granted a similar waiver request in 2018. However, this waiver expired at the end of the 2020-2021 school year and the need for such a waiver remains. In 2021, 23,203 physical science end-of-course tests were taken by eighth-grade students. Without a waiver, these students would not have been covered under ESSA's existing middle school exception and would have had to take the end-of-grade exam. A new waiver allowing the expansion of the ESSA exception to include all eighth-grade students taking high school physical science will further the State's commitment to providing accelerated learning opportunities for all students while eliminating the burden of double testing. Should this waiver be denied, more than 20,000 eighth grade students that take high school physical science across the state of Georgia each year will be expected to take the end-of-grade exam, which is not aligned to standards for the high school course.

In requesting this waiver, the State assures that it meets all three criteria mentioned above (a, b, and c) required for meeting the requested exception for eighth-grade students taking high school physical science.

Prior to submitting this ESSA waiver request, public notice is being provided to education stakeholders across Georgia. GaDOE is providing notification by posting an intent to request a waiver on the GaDOE website. In addition, the State has emailed information pertaining to the waiver to all district superintendents, assessment directors, curriculum directors, and Title I directors. Copies of all comments that GaDOE may receive from stakeholders in response to this notice will be attached to the waiver request sent to the U.S. Department of Education.